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SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BULLETIN

To: Members of the staff

Subject: PROCEDURES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE STAFF MANAGEMENT CONSULTATION MACHINERY AT THE DEPARTMENTAL OR OFFICE LEVEL*

1. The present bulletin is issued in order to reiterate the importance of staff-management consultation procedures at the departmental or office level, so that topics of particular concern to an organizational unit may be resolved expeditiously, without necessarily being referred to the Joint Advisory Committee. It provides guidelines on the procedures and terms of reference of the staff management consultation machinery at the departmental or office level. Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/206 is hereby superseded.

2. Heads of departments and offices will hold quarterly meetings with the appropriate unit representatives on matters of mutual concern. In addition to such regular meetings, meetings may be called at 48 hours' notice at the request of either side. Failure to hold regular meetings should be brought to the attention of the Chairperson(s) of the Joint Advisory Committee.

3. The following officials will participate in these meetings on behalf of the administration:

(a) The head of the department or office or, in his or her absence, the officer-in-charge;

(b) The executive or administrative officer;

(c) The personnel officer in charge of the office or department;

(d) The directors of divisions and chiefs of service, as appropriate.

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* Personnel Manual index No. 8031.

The participants representing the staff shall be the staff representatives of the unit or units concerned. The head of the department or office or, in his or her absence, the officer-in-charge, shall act as ex officio chairman of the meetings.

4. The issues subject to consultations at the departmental or office level shall, in particular, relate to the following:

(a) Matters affecting staff welfare, working conditions and efficiency and the identification of ways and means of improving them within the framework of the established regulations, rules and policies;

(b) The direct application of the Staff Rules under the authority delegated by the Secretary-General to heads of departments or offices, including the implementation at the departmental or office level of policies and recommendations approved by the Secretary-General bearing on the welfare of the staff;

(c) Problems and crises that may arise within the department or office with a view to solving them at that level.

5. While it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of issues that should be subject to consultations at the departmental or office level, the guidelines indicated below should be followed to determine whether an issue should be subject to such consultations:

(a) The issue or policy should affect the entire department or office or at least a significant number of staff in a particular unit or service of the department or office. Individual cases as such should not normally be subject to consultation. However, if an individual case entails issues requiring clarification of policies or procedures, the matter can be raised at the departmental or office level, provided that it has been already discussed at the appropriate level;

(b) The mechanism of consultations at the departmental or office level is designed to ensure that matters concerning staff welfare are discussed in the first instance at the departmental or office level;

(c) In cases where managerial decisions are taken that may have substantial implications for the careers, welfare and working conditions of the staff in the department or office, the staff affected should be informed of any such changes in advance and provide an opportunity for consultation on such matters at the departmental or office level.

6. A brief report of each meeting indicating the topics discussed and the decisions taken shall be forwarded to the supervisors concerned for the implementation and to the chairperson(s) of the Joint Advisory Committee. Copies should also be sent for follow-up action to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management and, as appropriate, to the Controller and/or Assistant Secretary-General of Conference and Support Services, depending on the subject-matter.

7. Staff members serving as representatives on the Staff Council will be allowed reasonable time off during working hours to carry out their representational responsibilities subject to the exigencies of service, and should be helped and encouraged in every way to discharge those responsibilities effectively. Those responsibilities, which shall be considered official under the Staff Regulations and Rules, shall include attendance at meetings duly authorized by the recognized staff representative bodies, consultations with supervisors on any changes in working conditions of the unit concerned, referral of problems of staff welfare to the appropriate staff-management body for further discussion, as well as assisting individual staff members, where requested, on matters falling within the terms of reference outlined in paragraph 4 above.

8. Any differences arising over interpretation of the provisions of the present bulletin should be brought to the attention of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management through the Joint Advisory Committee.

9. Staff-management bodies at duty stations away from Headquarters are encouraged to implement similar procedures.

Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI
Secretary-General